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Report of the Committee for Missions of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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THE Committee was appointed at the first meeting of the Synod held at Kingston in June 1831, and immediately addressed a Circular to the sessions of the different Churches requesting Congregational Collections, and the abstract of the Treasurer's Account which accompanies this report will shew to what extent these have been obtained. The Committee at the same time addressed a letter to the GLASGOW SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE RELIGIOUS INTERESTS OF THE SCOTTISH SETTLERS IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, requesting them to select from amongst the Preachers of the Church of Scotland a properly qualified Missionary and send him out to Canada, to be under the direction of the Committee—the Committee engaging to raise for the Missionary a salary of £200 currency, and leave him to pay his travelling expenses. The Committee also, both in that and other letters, urged the Society to send forth a Missionary or Missionaries of their own. Respectful letters were also sent to the EDINBURGH BRANCH OF THE GLASGOW SOCIETY, and to the SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, requesting in behalf of the Committee their aid and co-operation. From the two last Societies no answer has been received. The Glasgow Society complied with the request of the Committee as to selecting a Missionary. And Mr. Matthew Miller, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Glasgow—the object of their choice arrived in Quebec in the beginning of May last; his expenses having been kindly defrayed by the Society. Mr. Miller commenced his Missionary labours in the Upper Province in the beginning of June; and his journal which has been submitted to the Committee, affords ample indication of his zeal in preaching the Gospel, and his indefatigable labours in his Missionary travels. These have extended throughout several townships contiguous to Yonge street, in the Home District, and considerable portions of the Newcastle, Midland and Bathurst Districts. And Mr. Miller is now about to proceed to the Western and London Districts, there to remain until February 1st 1833, when new instructions will be sent to him. The friends of the mission will readily acknowledge the Lord's goodness in preserving Mr. Miller in all his journeyings during a pestilential season not soon to be forgotten in Canada, and in which, more than one Missionary of other denominations fell before they had entered on their labours. And it is but due to the Glasgow Society who selected Mr. Miller, and to Mr. Miller himself, to say that his preaching has been highly acceptable to all classes of the people amongst whom he has been sojourning, and his presence in many places has drawn forth a kind of thirsting for the word of life, which his transient visits have been very far from satisfying. He has been invited to settle in several places as a settled Pastor, which for the present however he has declined doing. In some places where he has preached the settlers have scarcely ever heard a sermon since they settled in the forests, and had never been visited by a Preacher of the Church of Scotland. The precise effect of Mr. Miller's extensive itinerancy it is impossible to estimate—it cannot however be contemplated without hope and joy, seeing that it is a law of the Kingdom of God, that His word shall not return unto him void, but shall produce fruit unto His own glory and praise.

The following facts and observations, not indeed new to those who are acquainted with the spiritual state of Canada, are yet strongly brought out by Mr. Miller's mission as reported in his journal.

- I. The want of Ministers of the Gospel in many places of Upper Canada* is great and urgent.
- II. A very great desire for Ministers from the Church of Scotland, is felt amongst almost all the Scottish settlers.
- III. A considerable number of well-qualified Preachers of the Gospel—according to the best sense of these terms, from the church of Scotland would immediately receive calls to settle as ministers in places where there is reason to believe, they would be extensively useful, and placed in circumstances of external comfort, and respectability.
- IV. A number of Preachers are immediately required for such places, and for itinerating in the more thinly settled townships. And unless a speedy re-inforcement of Preachers from the church of Scotland arrive, her day for contributing materially to the Evangelization of Canada shall have passed away.
- V. Some of the missionaries who are now required, should receive ordination to enable them to discharge all the functions of the ministry. Many of the settlers feel keenly, amongst other spiritual privations, the want of opportunities of dedicating their infant offspring to God in baptism; and one case within the knowledge of the writer of this report, and noticed by Mr. Miller, has occurred, of a settler who had been an elder in the highlands of Scotland, having baptized a child—this individual, however, has since confessed the error of which he had been guilty, more from a mistaken sense of necessity and the persuasions of the parent whose child he baptized, than from a presumptuous desire to intrude into the ministerial office.
- VII. The support of missionaries can to a certain extent be provided for by the people amongst whom they are sent. The church of Scotland or societies at home, and the churches under the synod, only require to come forward to aid a people prepared to welcome missionaries from the church of Scotland, and to exert themselves in supporting them.

A few Extracts from Mr. Miller's Journal are here submitted to the friends of the mission.

From B—I proceeded to C—, and preached there on Tuesday the 12th June. The presbyterians of this place, among whom are a few of our countrymen, have made great exertions. They have a church built of stone nearly completed, and have come under such engagements that the Glasgow Colonial Society is looking out for a minister to them. They had secured the methodist chapel for me to preach in, and I believe the methodist preacher was also present. There were about 70 people altogether, though it had been heavy rain for 2 or 3 hours before. I observed a quaker present, as I had several belonging that body at both B— and S—. I hope the spirit of God accompanied the preaching of his word. The people with whom I conversed privately, appeared to be much encouraged, and when one saw them so full of joy at the very idea of getting a minister to labour regularly among them, it was impossible not to feel deep regret, that while the harvest is so plentiful the labourers should be so few. They urged me to represent their case strongly to the synod in order that I might soon be sent to visit them again. They carried me on next day to Co—, 15 miles farther up the Lake, where notice had been given two days before that I should preach. Co— is a much larger and apparently even more thriving than C—. However, I had an audience of only about thirty persons who met in the methodist chapel. Co— formerly united with P— H— in the support of a minister, who is said not to have conducted himself properly. Now the former place has come under engagements along with C—, and is to share equally in the services of the minister who may be sent to that quarter. The people say, however, that they expect to be able in a few years to support a minister of their own. Besides the methodist chapel which is very small there is no other place of worship but the Episcopal church while the population of the village and neighbourhood is evidently much greater than these two churches can accommodate.

* Mr. Miller's Mission has been confined to the Upper Province though what is here affirmed is applicable to both Provinces.

On Tuesday the 19th June, when I first preached at V——, there were between 70 and 80 persons present who listened with much attention, and I hope were in some degree impressed with what they heard. I preached from Eph. II. 8. I gave out that I should preach again the following Sabbath forenoon, and went four miles up into the bush to the house of one of the elders with whom I stayed till the next Saturday. As the roads were deep and I had then no horse I could not make much progress in visiting. I saw however, about a dozen families mostly highlanders who were settled at intervals through the bush. They appeared all much gratified by my visit, and declared their earnest desire that a minister might be settled among them. On the Saturday the elders expressed a wish to have a collection made in aid of the synod's mission fund and requested me to give intimation to the people to that effect.

The next day being sabbath the 24th June, I preached at V—— according to intimation. The congregation amounted to perhaps 250 persons. I preached to them from Heb. IX. 27. The main body of the people behaved with great decorum, and seemed to be impressed with the subject which I endeavoured to press more closely home to them by reminding them of that pestilential disease which was advancing so rapidly to their own doors. Before dismissing the congregation I mentioned my intention of preaching there at the same time on the following Sabbath. I likewise intimated the collection for the Synod's fund, explained its object and endeavoured to enforce its peculiar claims upon them for support.

On this day I was introduced to two persons from the neighbouring townships of K— and W—, who hearing that I was to preach had come over the evening before. Their object they stated to be partly to hear sermon and partly to see whether any arrangement could be made between their townships and V— by which they might have the services of a minister between them. They mentioned that they would be satisfied if it could be no otherwise to have sermon once a fortnight, but less than that they said they would not have, I referred them to the elders of V—, and in the mean time intimated that I should preach at W— on the following Thursday and at K— on the Friday."

"Next day I preached in a small methodist chapel at W—— to between thirty or forty people. Several methodists were present, one, an old grey-headed man was pointed out to me who alleged that he had lived for the last seven years without sin; I did not know this till afterwards so that it seemed to be very providential that I was led in some degree out of my course to refer particularly in my sermon to the apostle Paul's account of the workings of indwelling sin in his own heart given in the 7th chap. of the Romans.

I found that the people of W—— had made up their minds to have if possible a minister from the church of Scotland. Forty acres of land in the township were bequeathed for the support of such a minister by a Col. G——, deceased some years ago. I lodged in the house of one of his sons who informed me of the circumstance, and also mentioned his own readiness to give besides for the same object, as much land as would be sufficient for a manse, and for the pasture of a horse, cows, &c. He intimated also that no difficulty would be made about raising a house for a minister. At N——, 5 miles from the place where I preached, I met several respectable people who appeared to be very anxious to have a minister of the church of Scotland. There are but few Scotchmen in this place or indeed in the township generally, but there are a number of presbyterians from the States, and likewise a great many who were described as being nothing at all, but who it is thought might be led to give some serious attention to divine things, were a pious and zealous presbyterian pastor settled among them. The people of W—— seem to be like sheep that have lost their shepherd and become the ready prey of any adventurer, who may attempt to inveigle them. All the different sorts of error which are destroying the people seem to find harbor here. In addition to these a new sect has sprung up among themselves called——. I met one of them and inquired into his principles, but he said he did not know what they were. A person with whom I conversed heard the same question put to their founder who seemed rather puzzled by it, and after a pause the only answer that could be elicited from him was that *their principles were derived from their practice.* Yet such is the state of ignorance in which a large part of the population is sunk that even such a proflator as this finds many followers, and has succeeded in getting a place of meeting. What pity that a people naturally shrewd and intelligent in other matters should be permitted to live in so great ignorance in regard to spiritual things.

I had reason to believe however, that there is a spirit stirring among the better part of the community which will lead them to make some exertions, and likewise to subscribe their money, in order to procure for themselves, one who shall dispense to them the bread and water of life. In order to encourage them I intimated that I should preach at N—— on the 22d of July, the first sabbath that I had disengaged."

"In the afternoon I went through the woods to preach in K—. The school-house was filled and about 300 persons who could not gain admittance sat outside close by an open window at which I stood. However, there were only about 150 persons in all. But it really was an interesting sight to see so many individuals collected together from the deep recesses of the forest with which we were surrounded on all sides for the purpose of hearing the glad tidings which had become almost strange to their ears. I felt at that moment as if there was more real pleasure in preaching the Gospel to these solitary tenants of the wood, even after riding ten miles through the bush in order to reach them, than in declaring it to the polished audience of a Scottish metropolis, where it is merely necessary to take the trouble of walking from the study to the pulpit.

The following day I spent in visiting the people of K——, and I could not but remark how much they seemed to be cheered by such attention to them. I found many of them with their very worst clothes on, and truly they were ragged enough, and with their hands and faces pretty closely resembling those of chimney-sweeps from the operation of logging for which the season was favourable. We sat down together just as they were, and my presence on such an errand seemed to recall their native land very vividly to their recollection, and from some eyes I saw tears beginning to start. Among other persons whom I visited, was a man who had been described to me as a professed unbeliever. He had been little more than six months in the country, and like many in similar circumstances was expressing his regret at having ever left his native land. He was an intelligent man who had read much, and I had observed him an attentive listener on the two occasions on which I had preached at K——. He referred to one of my discourses, in which it lay in my way to advert to certain kinds of sabbath profanation which are unhappily too common in the woods, and began to tell me of one man particularly addicted to such things, who by mere accident had been present to hear my discourse. He watched this man's countenance, he said, while I was speaking of certain ways in which the sabbath was profaned, and assured me that he seemed to feel a good deal uneasy. He mentioned moreover, that this same man had a daughter who died of a cold caught in assisting her father on a fishing excursion on sabbath, and told him on her death bed that if he continued such practices he would lose more of his children, and he himself would be burnt in everlasting fire. Finally he said, the man persevered in his course of sabbath profanation and lost two other children soon after. Having heard of the narrator's principles, I was surprised to hear him talk in this manner, but it seemed as if he felt there was a kindness in visiting him in his lonely dwelling in the woods, and that this had done more than the most skillful reasoning could have done to give him a favourable feeling towards the Gospel and its Ministers. Perceiving this, I did not think it expedient to endeavor to elicit his principles but thought within myself that here at least was one proof of the excellence of the Synod's plan of sending Missionaries to visit those settlements that are destitute of a Gospel Ministry.

I found all whom I visited a good deal alive to the subject of obtaining a Gospel Ministry among them, and my visit seemed to have the effect of quickening them, and I trust of setting them in motion for the purpose of trying what can be done."

"On the Tuesday following I left W— G— to proceed to T— and E—. The distance from W— G— is nearly 60 miles, and the road for the last 15 miles so bad that a horse is rather an incumbrance than a help. In G— I stopped to bait my horse at a tavern kept by a fellow-countryman, and from him I learned that there are a considerable number of Scotchmen in that township. Some of them have subscribed for the support of the Minister who may be sent to T— and E—. The tavern-keeper told me he thought they could raise £15 for a Minister whose occasional services they might receive. He importuned me a good deal to preach in the township on Sabbath, and not knowing how I might be situated in the place I was going to, I promised to send him a note informing him whether or not I could preach in G—.

The preaching station at T— (a miller's house, for they have no church either there or at E—) is 9 miles off up the forest there, and the country consequently is in a very rude state. As I arrived on a Wednesday, I wished to preach somewhere before Sabbath, but was told upon enquiry that there was no hope of getting a congregation there—I was directed however to E— as a more likely place—4½ I determined to proceed there the rather that where I was there was no pasture for my horse. The part of E— to which I went is 8 miles (nominally six) farther on, a mile and a half of it through a cedar swamp where all the improvement made is that the trees have been cut down. The people of E— whom I saw were warm hearted highlanders, and some of them I trust are men of God. This district where I stayed is called Isla from it being chiefly settled by highlanders, originally from Isla though most of them had been settled for a number of years in North Carolina. E— like T— has been settled only for about two years. The people are kind and most anxious for a Gospel Ministry. But it is not easy to see how they are to support one for the present.

The following day I preached in a school-house composed merely of logs, without the interstices being filled up. About 50 people assembled and formed a very attentive audience. I have derived fully as much satisfaction from my private intercourse with the people of E— as with those of any other township which I have hitherto visited. But they are still struggling with the first difficulties of settlers.

After preaching at E— on the Sabbath (Monday), I returned to P— T— in T—, and preached there in the evening. A like congregation as at E— awaited me, but I understood it was of a more promiscuous character containing few Scotchmen, and a number of individuals who were not Presbyterians. After preaching, I had some conversation with a person employed under government in the Indian department. His place of residence was at the N—. He represented to me that there were considerable numbers of my countrymen there, and that as they had lots of only 50 acres each, they were closer together than elsewhere, and could more easily assemble. He used every argument which he thought might induce me to pay them a visit—assuring me at the same time that they had roads."

"I preached at the O— Mills on Thursday, the 21st August, according to intimation. The place of meeting was the Kitchen of a private house where about 40 persons assembled. Since had come from a considerable distance. A man and his wife had brought a child 5 miles through the woods with the view of getting it baptized and they had to return over night—a difficult and even dangerous journey as the roads were deep. The people listened very attentively, but I am afraid they are not in a good state. The Township has been settled for 12 years, and contains they told me from 700 to 1000 people, yet they have never had so much as a school among them. I spoke to them very plainly as well as very strongly upon the subject, but I fear from the apparent state of matters among them that till a Minister is settled which I was told was intended for a School house—but nobody had been working at it for some time. I saw the posts of a house in the Township, but was told that those who were considered the leading characters were men of very loose and indeed infidel principles.

"Next Sabbath, the 5th August, I preached in the forenoon on the boundary line between M— and C—. It was not a house but only the posts of one with a roof over them which we occupied. It is intended for a Church. About 150 people were present, though pointedly on the subject of the prevailing pestilence which had just broken out among them, and was a good deal struck afterwards on hearing that 3 of those who heard me were cut off by it during the week."

"In crossing a River on Sabbath forenoon I observed 2 Indians standing on the bridge fishing—I stopped and asked the elder of them who seemed about 16 years of age, whether he had ever heard of the 4th Commandment? He said he had not. I then repeated the beginning of it and inquired whether he had ever heard that—he still replied, no, I asked him again if he had no idea of its being wrong to fish upon the Sabbath day—I received the same answer as before given not at all with the appearance of obtuseness or unwillingness to acknowledge a fault but with every mark of simple, unsuspecting ignorance. This, however, is nothing more than a fair specimen of the deep moral darkness in which the rising generation are permitted to lie—it is said are *unintentionally* permitted to do so by the *unintentionally* neglecting to set them right, and *unintentionally* by parents in this colony, that they have no right to influence in any degree the religious sentiments of their children."

Receipts and Disbursements of the Mission Fund since its commencement in June, 1831.

Collection at Kingston,	£17 0 0
" Cornwall,	6 10 0
" Lunenburg,	4 0 0
" St. John's Church, Quebec,	12 15 10
" Martintown,	15 0 0
" Perth,	9 0 0
" Bytown,	10 0 0
" Ancaster,	4 0 0
" Niagara,	7 16 10
" Wilmetown,	20 0 0
" Aliborough,	3 10 0
" St. Andrew's Church, Montreal,	27 3 4
" York,	20 12 0
The following are Mr. MILLER'S	
Collection at Vaughan,	1 14 8
" Eldon,	0 13 9
" West Gwillimbury,	2 7 6
" Peterborough,	3 18 5½
" Cavan,	1 6 5½
" Carlton Place,	1 17 3½
" Beckwith,	4 6 9½
" Ramsey,	5 15 9
" Cobourg,	2 5 0
" Two individuals, Ernest-town,	6 10 0
Three do. Whitechurch,	0 7 6
	£181 4 2

Cash paid Mr. MILLER,	£87 7 6
Printing Circulars and Postages,	2 12 4½
Balance in hands of the Treasurer,	91 4 3½
	£181 4 2

At the last meeting of the Synod, the Presbytery of Quebec was formed into a Committee of Missions for the Lower Province—and authorised in case of necessity to draw on the fund to the extent of £50.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE SYNOD.

York, November 19th, 1832.